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THE CORRESPONDENCE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH WITH THE RUSSIAN CZARS¹

THE relations of England with Russia began in 1553. In the autumn of that year an English ship, called the *Edward Bonaventure* and directed by the pilot Richard Chancellor, had been forced by contrary winds to seek harbor in the mouth of the river Dvina on the north coast of Russia. The sparse inhabitants of this desert country gave shelter to their unexpected guests, and sent to Moscow an account of what had happened, and the czar Ivan the Terrible invited the English to his court.

This monarch, who has long been known in history chiefly as a tyrant and a sanguinary monster, had entertained projects and ideas which were much in advance of the thoughts of the rest of the Muscovites; and one of them was to put his great empire in contact with the civilized nations of western Europe. His plans agreed with the desire of Chancellor to make "the discovery of the new country" a profit to the company of merchant adventurers, which had sent him out. Arrived at the Russian capital, the English agent proposed to establish regular commercial relations between the two countries by the new route which he had discovered; the czar agreed eagerly to this proposal and promised extensive privileges to the English merchants in his country. From 1555 on, the new company of merchant adventurers, called generally in the documents of the time "Russia Company" or "Muscovy Company", organized regular expeditions to Russia, which was to become a new and rich domain for the commercial activity and enterprise of the English. But the relations of England with Russia in the sixteenth century were not only commercial, but also diplomatic. This has been overlooked in England, and though the Russia Company has had the good fortune to interest English, American, and Russian historians,² the cor-

¹ A paper read at the International Congress of Historical Studies, in London, April 4, 1913.

² At the end of the sixteenth century Hakluyt in his *Principall Navigations* had gathered a quantity of documents concerning the English travels to Russia, and the organization and activity of the Russia Company, but it will be no exaggeration to say, that until the twentieth century these materials remained nearly unstudied and unused. In the second half of the nineteenth century two books concerning the relations of England with Russia appeared; Hamel, *England and Russia* (London, 1853) and Tolstoi, *The First Forty Years of Intercourse between England and Russia* (St. Petersburg, 1875). Both historians were Russians, both had worked in the English records and published in Russian and Eng-

respondence which was exchanged between Elizabeth and the Russian czars has remained almost entirely unknown. This most curious and very interesting correspondence is not at present easy to study as a whole, for it lacks a systematic and critical edition,³ yet its interest cannot be denied, for many questions concerning the activity of the Russia Company which remain unanswered, will find their clear and undoubted solution in those letters.⁴ More than ninety such letters dated from 1554 to 1603 have come to our knowledge, and surely many have been lost.⁵ Some of them have been published in various Russian works, but others remain unpublished and are to be looked for in the archives of England and

list; they gave valuable documents and information, but they did not try to use the materials in Hakluyt and to reconstruct the history of the Russia Company, which has had no historian until very recent years, when scholars of different countries have simultaneously taken an interest in it. We have first to mention, in England, W. R. Scott, *Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720* (Cambridge, 1910-1913). In the second volume of this remarkable work Professor Scott has given in 46 pages a description of the economic organization and finance of the Russia Company. W. S. Page, *The Russia Company from 1553 to 1660* (London, 1913); this little book has no historical value and consists almost entirely of a simple reprint of the documents published three centuries ago by Hakluyt. In America in 1912 a thesis, by Mr. A. J. Gerson, appeared under the title: *The Organization and Early History of the Muscovy Company* (New York, 1912). In 1911 I published in Russia an article under the title "The English Merchant Company in Russia in the Sixteenth Century" (*Anglijskaia Torgovaia Companiia v. Rossii (v XVI. Veke)*), in the historical review of the Historical Society of St. Petersburg (*Istoricheskoe Obozrenie*), t. XVI. In January, 1912, my French article "Les Marchands Anglais en Russie au XVI^e Siècle" was published in the *Revue Historique*, CIX. 1-26. In the same year the Russian Board of Commerce published the first part of my *History of the Commercial Relations of Russia with England* (*Istoriia Torgovikh Snoshenii Rossii s Angliyey*) (St. Petersburg, 1912).

³ No attempt has been made in England to publish this correspondence, with the exception of some individual letters published by Hakluyt and by Bond, *Russia at the Close of the Sixteenth Century*; and those who wish to read this correspondence will have to look for Russian editions. Many letters have been published in the book of Tolstoi, who printed them in duplicate, Russian and English or Latin; others are to be found in the *Collection of the Historical Society* (*Sbornik Istoricheskago Obtchestva*), t. XXXVIII.; many other Russian historical collections have printed separate specimens of this correspondence, but some interesting letters remain unpublished. I have printed three of them in the *Mélanges Bémont* (Paris, 1913).

⁴ As an example we will mention here only one point: On page 38 of his first volume Professor Scott raises the question, why in 1569 the company began to lose the support hitherto given to it by the czar. He considers that "unfortunately, it is impossible to determine whether this was due to the machinations of rival merchants, or whether it is to be attributed to malpractices of the company's agents in Russia". We shall see clearly by the study of this correspondence, that the reason was purely diplomatic (see p. 530).

⁵ Sometimes letters of one correspondent mention letters of the other which are not to be found.

Russia.⁶ Read separately and unsystematically these letters lose much of their interest, but when considered as a whole the correspondence is of great attractiveness to the historian; written by such great historical personalities, the letters represent two most different worlds of life and thought. The monarchs seek for a close alliance, which, as we shall see, proved difficult of accomplishment.

The originals of many of these letters have been lost, and are represented only by copies in the Public Record Office and British Museum; but the few which have survived show us precisely what was a letter of the czar sent to England or a letter of Elizabeth sent to the Russian court.

The originals of the czars' letters are very beautiful; they were written on parchment, the first lines in gold, in a large clear handwriting. Their seal with the double-headed eagle is often preserved unbroken. The letter begins with a short preamble, always the same, and with the long title of the czar, enumerating separately all the provinces of his vast empire. This was called in Russia "the big title", and was obligatory not only for the letters written in the chancery of Moscow, but also for those which were addressed to the Russian court; every time that Elizabeth tried to abbreviate it, the act was regarded as an offense to the dignity of the czar.

As to the English queen, she used always the short title: "Elizabeth, by the grace of God Queene of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc.", and her letters also had no preamble. At the end of them we find the subscription of the queen, which was not the custom of the Russian chancery.

Some letters of Elizabeth cannot be found in England, either in their original, or in an English or Latin copy, but have been preserved in the archives of Moscow in Russian translations of the sixteenth century.⁷ These documents may be defective in many points, and sometimes express inexactly the thought of Queen Elizabeth, but they are precious to the historian largely because they bring to his knowledge documents which might have remained unknown, but still more perhaps because they enable him to compare the letters of the queen and those of the czar, written in the same rude Russian style of the sixteenth century; the difference in the standard of mind and degree of culture of the two correspondents can be more completely

⁶ In England we find letters of the czars in London, in the Public Record Office, Royal Letters, and State Papers Foreign; in the British Museum, Nero B. VIII. and B. XI. and 13. B. I.; in Oxford in the Ashmolean. In Russia we have to look for letters of Elizabeth in Moscow, in the Records of the Board of Foreign Affairs (Arkiv Ministerstva Inostrannikh Del), English Letters.

⁷ Records of the Board of Foreign Affairs, English Books (Anglijskia Knigi).

felt and more surely appreciated, when the difference of linguistic form has disappeared.

The letters, whether originals or copies, are generally dated: those of the czars by the year of the Creation, those of the queen by the year of the Incarnation.

The style of the two correspondents is very different. The letters of the czars are in that respect documents of the Middle Ages. If the preamble and the title are always identical, the rest of the letter, on the contrary, lacks all order; its style is heavy and obstructed by repetitions, and even a Russian cannot easily come to a clear understanding of the document. The czar's letter is generally long, for it begins by summarizing the precedent letter of the queen, to which it gives an answer. This custom has its value, because it gives sometimes a résumé of a letter that has disappeared. But, if we overlook the defects of the style, we must recognize that we have in the czar Ivan a most fascinating writer; his letters are full of energy and vehemence, they show a force, a vigor, characteristic of the man—the intelligent and proud despot.

Compared with the writings of her Russian correspondent, the letters of Queen Elizabeth are quite modern, short and simple, expressing clearly the ideas of their author, and they are generally easy and agreeable to read. To the vehement force and rudeness of her correspondent Elizabeth opposes a great moderation and diplomatic ability; under very friendly and sometimes humble terms we find a firm mastership over word and action, a resolution to promise much and hold as little as possible.

Though regularly continued for nearly fifty years, this correspondence had its fluctuations, and the number of letters exchanged was very different in different years. The average was two or three letters per year, the greatest number eight, for 1589, but there were whole periods when the exchange of epistles entirely ceased, for example from 1575 to 1581.

Elizabeth corresponded with three Russian czars: from 1561 to 1583 with Ivan the Terrible; from 1584 to 1597 with his son, Feodor Ivanovitch, and from 1598 to 1603 with Boris Feodorovitch. Of these three correspondences the first presents the greatest interest, for two reasons: first, it falls in the more interesting period of the origins of the Anglo-Russian relations; and secondly, the czar Ivan the Terrible presents an unsolved enigma for the dispassionate historian and his letters to Queen Elizabeth, reflecting his mighty personality, are inestimable documents.

The two correspondents had very different motives for addressing each other. While the views of Elizabeth were exclusively com-

mercial, Ivan had political views and plans; the queen hoped to obtain commercial privileges for the English company, the czar wished to make her accept a political alliance between the two countries. This must be kept clearly in view. It gives a key to the understanding of the diplomatic and commercial relations between the two countries in the sixteenth century; and all the history of the Muscovy Company, of the difficulties which it experienced in Russia, can be explained only if we hold in mind the difference of views between the English policy in Russia and the Russian policy in England. Every time that the Muscovy Company loses its privileges in Russia, the reason is not to be looked for in the defects of its organization or in the lack of activity on its part, but in the reluctance of England to accept a political alliance with Russia.

The correspondence of the two monarchs reflects their different states of mind. Elizabeth is always trying to protect the interests of the Muscovy Company, which has received from her the privilege of the Russian commerce. In her first letters⁸ she addresses thanks to the czar for the amiable reception of her merchants at the court of Moscow; when they begin to be molested, she makes herself the echo of their complaints; she recommends to the czar the agents sent out by the company,⁹ and gives him information of their plans and desires.¹⁰ Ivan the Terrible was clever enough to understand that the activity of the company might be of great use to his country. The English had found a new route, by which they could come to Russia, unhindered by her neighbors, the Poles and the Danes, who joined their efforts to hold back his empire from contact with western civilization. An immediate importance for Muscovy lay in the importation of arms and skilled artisans; an unpublished letter of Elizabeth, dated May 18, 1567,¹¹ mentions English artisans gone to Russia, and in a letter, dated September 16 of the same year, the czar asks the queen to send him "an architect able to build castles, towers and palaces, a doctor, an apothecary, and other artificers, such as can seek for gold and silver".¹²

But all these needs did not occupy the first place in the considerations of the czar. The commercial privileges, which he so easily and so generously poured out upon the company, always had political

⁸ Tolstoi, *op. cit.*, nos. 5 and 6.

⁹ For example in a letter of July 26, 1573, in which she recommends William Merrick; MSS. of Hamel, v. 33.

¹⁰ See a letter of October 27, 1573, printed by Hamel, p. 108, and a letter of January 23, 1581, printed in a Russian translation in the *Collection of the Historical Society*, XXXVIII. 8. .

¹¹ MSS. of Hamel, v. 33, no. 3576.

¹² Tolstoi, no. 11.

motives; these can be closely studied in his secret letters and embassies, sent to England at different times and proposing to the queen a close political alliance, offensive and defensive, between Russia and England.¹³ Elizabeth had to display on such occasions all her diplomatic tact, which had prevented her so many times from being dragged into dangerous enterprises. Her guiding principle had been to encourage and elude at the same time the aspirations of different monarchs; but with the czar her rôle was a difficult one. Patience was unknown to that haughty, proud monarch, who had formed the habit of bending all around him to his iron will. The queen was out of his reach, but the English merchants were in Russia, and this was, he thought, the means to incline Elizabeth to accept his plans. She had shown him in her letters, how much she was interested in the welfare of her company; thanks to his high protection the English merchants had made large profits, but it was in his power to annul the privileges he had given them, and this the queen had to understand and to take into consideration.

In 1569 Elizabeth tried hard to avert the blow from her merchants, to give some satisfaction to her terrible new friend. She accepted a series of articles of a treaty he had elaborated;¹⁴ she agreed that England and Russia should be in perpetual friendship, that the enemies of the czar should become hers.¹⁵ In 1570 she promised by a secret letter,¹⁶ which received the signatures of ten members of the Privy Council, to receive the czar with all his family honorably in England, if he should be obliged by political troubles in Russia to seek shelter abroad.

But the only result of these concessions was to exasperate Ivan the Terrible; he had intended that the treaty should be concluded by both monarchs on the same terms, that both should subscribe identical paragraphs; if he obtained the promise to be received honorably in England, he wished also in his turn to be asked to guarantee his protection to the Queen of England in Russia. Elizabeth tried to explain, that it was impossible for her to suppose a case which could force her to leave England and seek shelter in his empire; the mere mention by her of such a possibility would be an

¹³ It was the famous traveller, Anthony Jenkinson, who, at his return to England, in 1567, had been charged by the czar to bring a letter concerning this alliance (dated September, 1567; Tolstoi, no. 12).

¹⁴ She had chosen as her ambassador for this occasion Sir Thomas Randolph; see Tolstoi, no. 15, "Copy of Instructions for Mr. Randolph sent into Moskovia", June 26, 1568, and Lansd. 10, f. 130, "The great Causes of Offence given to the English Ambassador Thomas Randolph from the Queenes Matle, to th' Emperor of Russia for the time of his beinge there in the yere 1568".

¹⁵ Tolstoi, nos. 21 and 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 26, May 18.

offense to the English people; it could not be the desire of "her dear and loving brother" to bring her into danger in her own country.

All this seemed an insult to the czar; in his exasperation he wrote to the queen October 24, 1570, in these terms:

Wee had thought that you had been ruler over your lande and had sought honor to your self and profit to your countrie and therefore wee did pretend those weightie affaires betweene you and us; but now we perceive that there be other men that doe rule, and not men, but bowers and merchants, the which seeke not the wealth and honour of our Maiesties, but they seeke there owne profit of marchandise: and you flowe in your maydenlie estate like a maide.¹⁷

Though the tone of this letter was dictated by fierce anger, it is extremely characteristic of the man, the absolute monarch and despot; he despises the reigning woman, the queen who has to reckon with her councillors and a Parliament. In several of her letters Elizabeth had represented her own wishes as though they were enforced on her by Parliament; in 1568 she had given the czar a real lesson in Parliamentary history, explaining at length how Parliament had pronounced on the organization and privileges of the Russia Company; when she refused the demands of the czar, she generally excused herself by alleging the will of her councillors. We know how little heed the Tudors sometimes paid to Parliament, but of course their ideal of absolutism was very different from the ideas of Ivan the Terrible concerning the privileges of an absolute monarch.

The negotiation of a political alliance between Russia and England came to a standstill. The first attempt had proved a failure, and the fact was bitterly felt by the English merchants, their position in Russia losing very much of its privileged character. But, contrary to all probability, the two countries did not come to a rupture; the correspondence between the czar and the queen continued. Elizabeth had succeeded in impressing on Ivan the conviction that, though she did not accept his offer now, she would yield in the future. To the insulting letter of the czar she had answered with much dignity and yet more moderation: "Our ambassador [Jenkinson] will tell you in all truth, that no merchants are governing the estate and our affairs, but we rule ourselves with the honnor befitting a virgin queen appointed by God; and no sovereign, thanks to God, has more obedient subjects."¹⁸ In 1570 large quantities of the English goods had been confiscated and English merchants had been molested. All this was taken into consideration and had an influence

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 28, taken from Cottonian, Nero B. XI.

¹⁸ Tolstoi, no. 31, gives the Latin original and a Russian translation.

on the queen in her decision to prevent a rupture. In August, 1571, the czar complained of the English merchants' conduct, but recognized that the real cause of their disgrace was the unwillingness of England to enter into an alliance with Russia.¹⁹ In 1572 he notified the queen, that the idea of the alliance had to be given up,²⁰ and, as his personal interest in the commercial relations had never been great, Elizabeth had to make efforts, that the correspondence and the friendship should not be dropped also. Politics were abandoned and the correspondence was led to safer commercial subjects.

Soon after the English had found the new way to Russia, other nations, especially the Dutch²¹ and the French,²² had taken advantage of their discovery and followed them on the new route. This fact might aid in leading the czar to consider, that his grant of privileges to the English company might be unprofitable for Russia, as they might hinder merchants of other countries from coming and trading in the empire. Under these circumstances the task of the queen was a difficult one, but her political tact and her firm resolve to protect the interests of the company mastered all the difficulties. She obtained from the czar for the merchants his protection and the restitution of their confiscated goods. In an unpublished letter, dated October 20, 1572,²³ the queen acknowledged that the czar had done for her merchants everything she could wish, and in 1573 the company made plans to send many ships out to Russia.²⁴

If the czar had given way in this matter, it was because he always secretly hoped for the realization of his plan of alliance with England. In 1574 he made a new effort in that direction. The idea of a political alliance with Russia had at that time found adherents in England. The company, which had experienced the wrath of the czar and its consequences, was eager that a political union between the two countries should take place. The reflection of its desires is to be found in a manuscript, entitled: "Certayn notes made by me Michail Lock,²⁵ the 8th of May, anno 1576, in London, touching the benefit that may growe to England by the traffique of English merchants into Russia through a firme amity

¹⁹ Tolstoi, no. 32.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 35.

²¹ The first vessel of the Dutch came to Lapland in 1565, and to the river Dvina in 1577.

²² On the relations of Russia with France see Delavaud, *Les Français dans le Nord* (1911).

²³ MSS. of Hamel, v. 33, no. 3676.

²⁴ Hamel, *op. cit.*, p. 108; letter of Elizabeth, dated October 27, 1573.

²⁵ At that time he was agent in London for the Muscovy Company; see Hakluyt, III. 197-200.

betwene both the Princes."²⁶ This document gives a detailed account of the commercial position of Russia and the possible profits of the company. The natural commodities of England are most acceptable for the Muscovites; the northern country needs warm woolen clothes, and England, France, and other countries need the Russian raw materials, which the English merchants can export over the new route; this route has the great advantage, that it can be used without interference from the enemies of Russia, Poland, and Denmark. The Persian trade, which the company has opened up through Russia and the Caspian Sea, is of great value to England. The Russian czar is the richest monarch of Europe. When he transported his treasury, he loaded 4000 carriages with the riches of one of his five palaces, and it is natural for him, a brave and militant monarch, to look for the friendship of England. All these reasons make the alliance with Russia thoroughly advisable.

Though always ready to pay attention to the interests of her merchants, Elizabeth was not inclined to be forced by them into an alliance which she found it necessary to reject for political reasons. In January, 1576,²⁷ Ivan had to complain bitterly to the English ambassador, Sylvester, of the queen's unsympathetic conduct toward him; he announced haughtily, that he now no longer needed the friendship of England; he was concluding an alliance with the Emperor Maximilian and would take away from the English company its privileges, to bestow them on German and Venetian merchants. We see very clearly in this case, that commercial interests were subordinated in the mind of the Russian czar to his political plans.

For the six following years, from May 10, 1575,²⁸ to January 23, 1581,²⁹ no exchange of letters between England and Russia has come to our knowledge; but the intercourse between the two countries was not quite abandoned. Sylvester had left Russia in 1576; he was soon sent back with new letters and perhaps new concessions on Elizabeth's part, but the negotiations were interrupted by an unhappy accident. Sylvester was killed in Kolmogori by a stroke of lightning, at the moment when he was trying on a dress of yellow satin, in which he was to present himself before the czar; all his papers were burned. When Ivan the Terrible learned the news it

²⁶ Harleian 541, ff. 165-173. The idea of that project had existed already in 1575, see Harleian 296, ff. 190-194, May 8, 1575.

²⁷ Tolstoi, no. 40.

²⁸ MSS. of Hamel, t. 33, no. 3690; letter of Queen Elizabeth to Czar Ivan.

²⁹ Coll. of the Hist. Soc., XXXVIII. 8 and *Collection of State Charters and Treaties (Sobranie Gosudarstvennikh Gramot i Dogovorov)*, t. V., no. 134; letter of Elizabeth to Ivan.

struck him with great force; it was God's wish, he said, to interrupt the negotiations, so he let them drop, and during three years nothing was heard of them. The czar was at that time preoccupied by anxieties occasioned by the wars with Sweden and Poland. But in 1580, after several losses in Livonia, he sent to England, "over the mountains", an Englishman, who was at that time living in Russia, Jerome Horsey, to obtain from Elizabeth military supplies. This journey could be undertaken only by a man of courage; it was full of dangers, as the messenger had to pass through the territories of the foes of Russia; the letter to the queen was enclosed in a flask and hidden in the horse's mane. Horsey succeeded and came back next spring with thirteen boats, laden with munitions. This proved the beginning of a new period of friendly relations between the two countries. Elizabeth and Ivan resumed their correspondence.

The last three years of Ivan's reign brought under new consideration the old diplomatic questions, the alliance between the two countries and the provision for the czar's finding a refuge in England. But the years had also forged a new plan in the head of the uneasy Russian monarch; though he had married six times, he was tempted by the idea of a new union with a near relative of the queen; the bride chosen was Lady Mary Hastings. Two Russian ambassadors, Pisemski and Neoudatcha, were sent to see her and treat the matrimonial question,³⁰ and Elizabeth sent out to Russia, as her own ambassador, Sir Jerome Bowes.³¹

This choice has often been severely criticized. It is true that Bowes was impertinent and arrogant, that he had violent controversies not only with the "boyars" and the "diaks", but with the czar himself, who showed in these negotiations a patience which could not be easily expected from his terrible character and despotical mind. But if we consider what were the plans of Elizabeth in the premises, we shall not find Bowes unsuited to carrying them out. The queen, who had for so many years evaded political alliance with Russia, was not eager to give satisfaction to the new matrimonial plan of Ivan. But, in consideration of her merchants' interests, she could not repulse him; her position was very delicate and sincere conduct seemed impossible. Bowes's character made him valuable to her. He had a courage that did not shrink from refusing certain demands, even when they came from the czar

³⁰ Letter of the czar to the queen, dated May, 1582; Tolstoi, no. 41; and instructions of the czar to his ambassadors, *ibid.*, no. 42; for the history of this embassy see *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 3-65.

³¹ On the journey of Bowes see Hakluyt, III. 315-330; the instructions given to Bowes, *ibid.*, 308-311, and Tolstoi, nos. 45, 46, 48, and 49; history of this embassy, *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 72-84.

personally ; a lie was of no consideration to him and, when it was needed, he could easily promise things which, he knew, would never be fulfilled.³² It is not to be denied, that his conduct made a profound impression on Ivan, who pardoned him his impertinences, admired his courage, and held up his loyalty to the queen as an example to his boyars. Probably, if Ivan had lived longer, Bowes might have obtained what was wanted in England: new privileges for the merchants without a definite engagement for the political alliance and matrimony.

The unexpected death of the czar put the English ambassador in a new and difficult situation. Until his last days Ivan had made friendship with Queen Elizabeth one of the guiding principles of his foreign policy ; in a secret letter, brought by Bowes, he mentions the possibility of his making the journey to England. The reasons for this marked sympathy of the Russian czar towards England have been discussed many times. We think that the first and principal of them was the desire of this remarkable monarch, who in this respect was continuing the policy of his predecessors, to bring Russia into contact with civilized Europe. The astonishing activity of the English in Russia attracted the attention of the czar Ivan, who was looking for a powerful alliance to help him against his numerous enemies, and for a firm friendship to give him protection in case of possible troubles and treason in his own empire. It is impossible to tell whether he had serious reasons to fear an insurrection that would force him to leave his throne, but in any case it is certain that he had seriously counted on the possibility of passing with all his family to England. Undoubtedly Elizabeth could not look forward with pleasure to such an eventuality, which might become the source of new political complications. Did not the Queen of Scotland give trouble enough to her mind ? And could not the Czar of Russia remain quietly in his country to protect the trade of the English company ? That was all she had ever asked from him, and all his plans of political and matrimonial alliance and voyages to England were unexpected and undesired complications of the Anglo-Russian relations, which she desired to be only commercial, and which the czar tried hard to make political. After the first active step which the English had taken toward discovering Russia and establishing a new trade, they had received in Muscovy so many privileges, the czar had shown himself so eager to continue the intercourse between the two countries, that England felt the necessity of

³² The secret negotiations of Bowes with the czar are printed in the *Northern Archives (Severnii Arkiv)*, t. V., pp. 109-120.

passing from the active to the passive, and of leaving the czar to make propositions, to which the queen gave evasive answers.

But if Ivan was elaborating plans to bind his country to England, his subjects were very far from approving his policy. The English merchants often complained of the animosity of the Russian people against the strangers; the Russian merchants hated these new invaders of their trade. At the Russian court many of the boyars regarded the sympathy and mildness of their terrible sovereign toward the English ambassadors as an offense to his own entourage, who had to tremble before him. Some of them protected the Dutch, who, as the English said, paid generously for that protection. The plan of the czar to marry an English girl was an offense to Russian patriotism and orthodoxy; his kindness toward the impertinent English ambassador, Bowes, irritated the court.

At his death all this accumulated hostility against the English and their ambassador found opportunity to display itself. The situation of Bowes became very uncertain and delicate and his natural arrogance put him into serious danger. He was confined to his house, and the hostility against him was so great, that for a time he was obliged to fear for his life. But, as the moderate party gained the upper hand at the court, he was liberated and sent back. He even received letters for the queen, but they were very insufficient; the new privileges, for which he had negotiated, were denied him. During his journey to the north coast he had to suffer ill treatment and, so he asserts, narrowly escaped murder. His arrogant character was not well fitted to support such calamities, which had never yet been the share of an English ambassador in Russia. He lost his temper and, once out of danger on the English ship, longed for vengeance, for a mode of offense against the country that had defeated all his plans. All he could do was to send back secretly the insufficient letters and presents; they were deposited on the shore, and before the Russians could protest, the ship with the English ambassador left the Russian waters.

Thus, the Anglo-Russian relations had become unsatisfactory at the beginning of the new Russian reign; each party had seriously offended the other, and an aggravation of this bad situation might easily be feared. But, happily for both countries, and especially for the English merchants, this misunderstanding had no fatal consequences; at the Russian court the influence of a more moderate mind was soon felt, and England was eager to profit by the circumstance.

A new correspondence began between Elizabeth and the young czar, Feodor Ivanovitch. After 1586 the regent Boris Godounov,

who was in reality the ruler of Russia during that reign, entered also into correspondence with the Queen of England.³³ He had been victor over the conservative and nationalist party, and posed as a protector of the English in Russia. The correspondence between the two courts at that period becomes more regular. If the correspondents no longer speak of exclusive and external friendship, they compensate this cooler mood by leaving out offenses and threats. The English merchants could quietly live in Russia under the reign of Feodor, and had not to fear constantly the abolition of their privileges and the confiscation of their goods. The new czar had completely abandoned the plans of his father as to establishing a political alliance with England, and both correspondents remained on the safer ground of commercial interests. Their letters became sometimes extremely long, and give rich materials for the history of the Muscovy Company and its interests in Russia at the end of the sixteenth century.³⁴ Great abuses had found place among the English. The servants and apprentices ruined the society by their exaggerated expenses. The governors complained that they wore silk and velvet clothes, built houses, bought horses and dogs, while their masters in England lived simply and honestly.³⁵ Life in Russia was considered to have a most demoralizing effect on the young factors. One of them wrote to Walsingham from Russia, February 8, 1586, telling him, that he remembered the good counsel the secretary had given him before his departure to far Russia, to keep his good name for honesty, and declaring that Russia had not corrupted him.³⁶

Even the agents themselves were not irreproachable. Tempted

³³ The first letter of Elizabeth to Godounov is dated March 24, 1586; it is to be found only in a Russian translation; *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 173. The first letter of Godounov to Elizabeth is dated June, 1587; *ibid.*, p. 184.

³⁴ The company had always been interested in the establishment of a peaceful intercourse between the two countries, and many letters were written at different times by its members to influence the English court in that direction; see State Papers, Russia, I., ff. 44, 187, etc. Sometimes they addressed Godounov personally; Lansd. 53, no. 19.

³⁵ Nero B. XI., ff. 321-328, §§ 32-36; letter dated September 18, 1565; see also a letter of Bowes, complaining of the bad conduct of his servant, George Roper, in State Papers, Russia, I., "Sir Jerome Bowes Information against George Roper".

³⁶ State Papers, Russia, I., f. 8. "I moste humblye take my leave givinge you thankes for your good counsell, given me at Richmounde in your lodginge afore my commynge out of Englande, and was that I shold looke to my selfe, to mayntayne and keepe that good name of honestie which it pleased you to saye that I then had: what was more spoken by your Honor of the soyle of Russia, and by Mr. Raphe Bowes [Ralph Bowes, brother of Jerome Bowes] of the soyle of Westminster I do well remember, and do assure your Honor that (God contnewinge his grace toward me, without the which the moste strongest must need fawlt) Russia shall not corrupt me, nether one waye nor other; it hath not increased me in welthe, it shall not decrease me in my good name."

by interlopers, they entered into illegal enterprises and, neglecting the interests of their masters, traded for themselves. Horsey, who had come again to Russia as ambassador, pursued there a deplorable line of conduct and protected unfaithful servants and interlopers. As an example of their doings we may mention the affair of Marsh. Thomas Marsh had served the company during its expeditions to Persia, but profiting by his friendship with Horsey, he played it false and contracted in its name personal debts to the amount of 23,000 roubles. In 1587 Elizabeth wrote to Feodor³⁷ to warn him against giving confidence to Marsh, and in July of the same year the czar complained in his letter to the queen of the bad conduct and abuses of that English merchant.³⁸ This affair of Marsh was discussed in many letters,³⁹ and the company had finally to suffer considerable losses through his treacherous conduct.

In a letter of January 15, 1589,⁴⁰ Elizabeth tried to put an end to such abuses and to protect the company against the consequences of fraudulent conduct on the part of its dishonest servants; she asked the czar that all confidence should be refused to Englishmen who could not prove membership in the company by presenting recommendations from the agent. But the czar on the contrary was inclined to establish liberty of trade for all alien merchants in his dominions; he and his regent asked the queen in their letters to abrogate all restrictions for English merchants who wished to trade in Russia. In 1589 the czar wrote:

Dear sister, queen Elizabeth, you ought to give access to our empire to all men of your country, allowing them free commerce. . . . There is no such rule in any kingdom, that some merchants should have the liberty to trade, and others should be deprived of it; and if you continue in this course your love for Our Majesty, dear sister, will not be perfect.⁴¹

The same idea is expressed in the letter of the regent:

Your Majesty, mighty Queen, in your letter you announce to me an imperfect affection toward my czar, His Imperial Majesty, in that you write, that some of the merchants your subjects may come for trade into the realm of our Lord, and others are not to come.⁴²

The guiding principle of Godounov's policy had been to open the doors of Russia to the merchants of all countries and to stimulate competition among them; though posing as the friend of the English,

³⁷ *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 186, Russian translation.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

³⁹ June, 1588; *ibid.*, p. 197; January 15, 1589; Tolstoi, nos. 63 and 64; March 23, 1589; *ibid.*, no. 65.

⁴⁰ Moscow, English Letters, no. 8.

⁴¹ Tolstoi, no. 68, April, 1589.

⁴² *Ibid.*, no. 69, July, 1589.

he was in reality the protector of all the strangers who had the energy to profit by the new commercial route.⁴³ The Dutch and the French had been the first after the English to take that advantage. In a letter of January 15, 1589, Elizabeth bitterly complained, that the Dutch established in Russia had been the cause of many grievances and losses to her merchants. But she felt the impossibility of stopping the current of progress in Russia, the influx of other nations into the country; it was impossible to hope for the conditions which had existed thirty years before, when the English merchants were the sole masters of the Russian market. So the queen had to consent, by reason of her great love to the czar, so she assured him, to suffer the competition of strangers, the English merchants meanwhile retaining the advantage of exemption from the payment of customs.

At this time a new English ambassador, Fletcher, had been very ill received in Russia,⁴⁴ and the relations between the two countries had to pass again into a period of troubles. On April 1, 1590, the queen complained bitterly to the czar of great offenses, which her merchants endured in silence since the death of his father, and warned him, that this patience could not last any longer.⁴⁵ In August she sent him a new letter, in which she described all the grievances of the company and summed up all the losses which it had experienced by the fault of Russia; for the reign of Ivan this sum was, she declared, 60,000 roubles, approximately equivalent to the considerable sum of 4,000,000 roubles of our days, or two million dollars.⁴⁶

We see that, if in the reign of Ivan the intercourse between the two nations had been endangered only by politics, in the reign of Feodor commercial controversies had the same effect. Of course the English queen had reasons for complaint, but the Russian czar also had his well-founded grievances, which he enumerated in his letter of July, 1591.⁴⁷ Horsey had been sent back to Russia, though the Russian court had complained to England of his bad conduct; the title of the czar had been abbreviated in the last letters; and many other offenses had been committed. On January 14, 1592, Elizabeth sent an excuse for these oversights,⁴⁸ and the conciliatory disposi-

⁴³ On the political ideas of Godounov see I. Lubimenko, "Boris Godounov", *Revue du Mois*, t. VII., February 10, 1909.

⁴⁴ On the embassy of Fletcher see *Vremennik* of the Imperial Historical Society of Moscow (*Vremennik Imperatorskago Moskovskago Obtchestva Istorii i Drevnostey Rossiiskikh*, "Postatenii Spisok Fletchera"), t. VIII.

⁴⁵ Tolstoi, no. 70.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 73.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 74.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 76.

tion of Godounov helped to smooth the way to reconciliation.⁴⁹ The company was freed from a part of Marsh's debts, the privileges which had been given in 1586 were renewed. The queen on May 20, 1597, addressed her thanks to the czar⁵⁰ and his regent.⁵¹

The next letter of Elizabeth, written January 18, 1598, was received by the new czar Boris.⁵² Feodor had died and Godounov, who was the brother of his wife, had taken the throne. The young brother of Feodor, Dmitry, had died as a child; and, though some years later Godounov had to encounter the accusation of complicity in the murder of the young prince, at the time of Feodor's death his administrative ability marked him as the best candidate for the throne of Russia. So the regent Godounov became the czar Boris; the "friend of the English" received the whole power to prove to them the value of his friendship. Yet their position in Russia remained unchanged; the charter of privileges which the new czar delivered to them in 1598⁵³ repeated in all principal points that of 1586.⁵⁴ The trade with Persia, which had proved so lucrative to the company under the reign of Ivan, had not been authorized under the reign of Feodor and remained prohibited now; merchants of other nations continued to trade in Russia. Elizabeth had written, on May 29, 1598, a letter of condolence,⁵⁵ and on June 24, 1599, a letter of congratulation⁵⁶ to the new czar Boris, and the correspondence between the two monarchs took its natural course. But the queen had more and more to reckon with the new position of Russia. The czars were entering into relations with other monarchs. The emperor and the pope accused the Queen of England at the Russian court of helping the Poles and the Turks; Czar Boris wrote to her, expressing his astonishment at this news; Elizabeth in her answer denied it.⁵⁷

Many letters which were exchanged between the Russian and English courts at that time have not been published. We find

⁴⁹ *Tolstoi*, no. 77.

⁵⁰ *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 246.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 247; see also an unpublished letter in the Public Record Office, State Papers, Russia, I. (September 1, 1597).

⁵² *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 254.

⁵³ The Russian original of this document has been lost; English translation in the Public Record Office, State Papers, Russia, I., ff. 60-67; published by I. Lubimenko, *History of the Commercial Relations of Russia with England*, I. 164-170.

⁵⁴ Published in Russia, *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 176-179; English translation in State Papers, Russia, I.

⁵⁵ *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 260.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁵⁷ St. P., Russia, I., ff. 56-58; *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 274, and English Letters (Moscow), no. 16.

originals of Elizabeth's letters in the records of Moscow, for example a letter of May 16, 1601,⁵⁸ in which she gives high praise to the Russian ambassador, Mikoulin;⁵⁹ he had been in England during the insurrection of the Earl of Essex and had shown himself ready to protect the English queen at the peril of his own life.⁶⁰ Unpublished letters of Czar Boris are to be found in the records of England: in Oxford, the original of a letter, dated June, 1602,⁶¹ and in London at the Public Record Office and British Museum, a letter dated April, 1603.⁶²

The regulation of the commercial relations had proved successful in the precedent reign, and the two correspondents now came back to politics, which had been abandoned for many years. The possibility of matrimonial alliances for the two children of the czar, a son and a daughter, with English princes was considered. With that question in mind the queen gave secret instructions to her ambassadors, Richard Lea in 1600⁶³ and John Merrick in 1601.⁶⁴

The English merchants tried to influence the queen to propose to the czar English matches for his children.⁶⁵ They feared that a marriage between the young Russian princes and certain Danish or Polish princes would give advantage to merchants of these nations and ruin the English trade in Russia. If the queen was not disposed to ally herself with the czar, she could choose for his children remote relatives, and if they were not of convenient age, they could readily be refused; but at least the czar would see that the queen was ready to meet his wishes. If England was not eager to bind herself to Russia, it was not sound diplomacy to show it to the Russian monarch, who could be easily contented by the display of a pretended desire for closer friendship.⁶⁶

The matrimonial project of Boris had no consequences. Elizabeth died shortly after these negotiations, and the czar followed her three years later, leaving his young children unmarried and unprotected.

The close relations of England with Russia in the sixteenth century led to no visible historical results; but the activity of the English merchants in Russia had its consequences. They had ren-

⁵⁸ English Letters, no. 18.

⁵⁹ On this embassy see *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 278-315.

⁶⁰ See also English Letters, no. 17.

⁶¹ Ashmolean, 1763, no. 1538.

⁶² St. P., Russia, I., and Nero B. XI.

⁶³ For materials concerning this embassy, see *Coll. of the Hist. Soc.*, XXXVIII. 315-419.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 419-431.

⁶⁵ St. P., Russia, I., f. 93.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 113.

dered a great service to Russia, providing the young country at the period of its political expansion and social development with arms, skilled artisans, and useful goods. Their initiative showed to the other nations the new free route to the empire of the czars. Their agents and servants who established themselves in Muscovy gave to the uncivilized Muscovites valuable examples of active labor and civilized conditions of life.

The Russian court had its share of the English influence. We have seen how much the English had been esteemed by Ivan the Terrible, how highly he praised their courage and their loyalty. Boris Godounov was fond of passing long days at his country-house near Moscow in the society of English physicians, and they surely had an influence on his mind, on his ardent desire to civilize the great empire. If he could not fulfil as a czar all he had planned in that direction as a regent, it was because he had to fight against the stubborn opposition of the nationalistic nobility and the orthodox clergy. But the spirit which had enlightened him was not extinguished with his death; it smouldered at the Russian court during the seventeenth century and reappeared with all brightness and force in the vast reforms of the most remarkable czar of Russia—Peter the Great.

INNA LUBIMENKO.